

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BY KICTANet, PARADIGM INITIATIVE, CIPESA, AIRA, AND INTERNET SOCIETY KENYA CHAPTER

Urgent Concerns Regarding Internet Shutdown in Kenya during the #RejectFinanceBill2024 demonstrations.

Nairobi, Wednesday, June 26th, 2024: We express deep concerns about the Internet shutdown in Kenya.

Despite assurances on Monday, June 24th, from the Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) that Internet access would not be restricted during the **#RejectFinanceBill2024** protests, the events of June 25th paint a contrary picture with the Internet shutdown. This action violates provisions of the Constitution of Kenya and international human rights law, which guarantee fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, access to information, and peaceful assembly."

Global Internet observatory [NetBlocks](#) confirmed an Internet outage on June 25, 2024. Kenyan telecommunication companies [Safaricom](#) and [Airtel](#) attributed these disruptions to "outages on undersea cables."

A day earlier, the CA Director General [acknowledged](#) that Internet shutdowns "would sabotage our fast-growing digital economy" and stated that "CA has no intention whatsoever to shut down Internet traffic or interfere with the quality of connectivity." However, the current disruptions experienced by Kenyans contradict this statement.

While the exact cost of the recent Internet disruption is yet to be established, the Internet Society estimates that such an outage could cost Kenya's economy \$6.3 million in lost GDP each day. During the disruptions, mobile money services, credit and debit card transactions, and e-commerce platforms were all inaccessible.

We firmly denounce the arbitrary restriction of the Internet. An open and accessible Internet is crucial for economic development, social progress, and a strong democracy.

We remind the Kenyan government that the Access to Information Act 2016, Part II, Section 4, provides that *every citizen has the right of access to information held by (a) the state; and (b) another person where that information is required for the exercise or protection of any right or fundamental freedom*. Unimpeded communication and government accountability are the cornerstone of a functioning democracy hence the government of Kenya must be transparent on the role played in the disruption of the Internet on 25th June, 2024.

Article 34 protects media freedom, and Article 35 protects access to information. The Kenya Union of Journalists reported threats to [shut down some media outlets](#). Restricting access to information limits transparency and fosters misinformation.

In light of the prevailing circumstances, it is important that Safaricom, Airtel, and other ISPs clarify who gave the orders for the shutdown and whether there was any official documentation or directive from the government or regulatory bodies.

Additionally, CA the sector regulator should clarify their role during the Internet shutdown, and how their actions aligned with its prior commitment to #KeepItOn.

Finally, we urge the Government of Kenya, including the Ministry of Information, Communications & The Digital Economy, and the Ministry of Interior & National Administration, to provide a comprehensive explanation regarding the internet shutdown. These ministries must ensure transparency and accountability by disclosing any directives issued and the rationale behind them. Furthermore, we call on these ministries to reaffirm their commitment to upholding the constitutional rights of freedom of expression, access to information, and peaceful assembly, and to take necessary measures to prevent future disruptions.

For any clarification and media briefing, contact info@kictanet.or.ke.

ENDS.